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HISTORY

— OF THE —



Esquimau Race.

The EDITH *and* LORNE PIERCE
COLLECTION *of* CANADIANA



Queen's University at Kingston



Yours truly,

THOMAS G. SCOTT,

Manager Esquimaux Village.

SHORT HISTORY

— OF THE —

The Esquimaux and their Habits and Customs.

I will endeavor, in a few short pages, to give the reader a brief description of a people that the general public of this country know little about. I have had the pleasure of being connected with the Esquimau village in Chicago during the six months the World's Fair has been open, and have had an opportunity of learning a great deal more about these strange people than I could possibly have learned from reading all the books that ever was written on the subject ; and sincerely hope that the following pages will meet with the approval of my readers.

Yours truly,

THOMAS G. SCOTT.

THE ESQUIMAUX.

When a person sees the Esquimau for the first time, in this country, they come to a hasty conclusion, and call them Indians. They have two reasons for this surmise. The first is their color, and the second their high cheek bones. If they are like the Indian in those two respects, then they are like the Fijis, South Sea Islanders, Maoris of New Zealand, Kanakas and Mongolians, as they are all copper colored and have high cheek bones; but there the resemblance ends with all those aboriginies, except the Mongolians, whom they resemble very much. We read in the works of Dr. John Kane, of Philadelphia (the great Arctic explorer), that, in his opinion, the Esquimaux originated from the Japanese race; and when we take into consideration their short stature, their small hands and feet, the peculiar growth of their beards, and their quiet, peaceable habits, we cannot see that they resemble any other race of people but the Japanese. When you put the two races side by side in numbers, as I have frequently seen them in Chicago, the likeness becomes pronounced. The supposition is that Japanese explorers must, at some far distant period, have landed on the coast of Greenland or Labrador, and there remained, laying the foundation for a race that has become distinct. The only thing that historians have not told us is where they get their language from—they having one of their



A Representative Group of Esquimaux in their Winter Costumes.

own that is entirely different from any other, especially in this respect: They have no numerals—most of them doing their counting in German, taught them by the German missionaries.

The first missionaries to visit Labrador one hundred and fifty years ago were German Lutherans, and they established that religion so firmly there that nearly all the Esquimaux are Moravians, and, as a rule, are very devout Christians—one of the number coming to the United States being an ordained Moravian priest, a very well educated man in his own language. He is now writing a history of his travels in the United States, giving his views of all he sees in this country.

When it was decided that the World's Columbian Exposition was to be held in Chicago, there was a company formed—called the Esquimaux Exhibition Company—for the purpose of sending to Labrador for a number of the Esquimaux race, to form a village for exhibition purposes on the World's Fair Grounds. The party who went after them thought all he had to do was to go to the first village on the coast, secure fifty Esquimaux and return; but he found it no easy task, as he had to traverse eight hundred miles of the coast of Labrador before he succeeded in getting the party together—arriving there in the middle of June, 1892, and leaving there on the 1st of September.

They arrived in Boston on the 15th of October. Leaving Boston the same day, they arrived in Chicago on the 18th of October, and were at once located in their village in the north-western corner of the Fair Grounds, this being the only Foreign village located on the World's Fair Grounds proper—all the others being on Midway Plaisance—the Esquimaux village being

located on the Fair Grounds to have the use of the Lagoon for their boats.

The party, when they arrived in Chicago, numbered forty-seven. Of that number, three have died from disease ; one was drowned in the Lagoon ; six were sent home on account of sickness ; I have ten with me, and the balance—thirty—have gone to California for the Mid Winter Fair ; and are to be returned East and landed in Boston by the 1st of June, 1894—my party meeting them there—when they are to be returned to their own country, and landed in their villages by the end of August, according to contract—their contract having been made for two years—and when they are returned the chances are that we will never see the genuine Esquimaux in the United States again.

LABRADOR.

Labrador is part of the mainland of North America, but does not belong to Canada, as most people suppose ; but is under the government of New Foundland, which has a government distinct from the Canadian. A great many ask, “What was the government of Labrador before the British took possession ?” They never had any, not needing it. Here’s where they differ from all others of the human race that we know of. The Esquimaux never had a ruler of any kind ; never had a war of any kind ; no courts, no murders, no robbers. Every man for himself ; help one another in case of need ; and always do unto others as you would be done by, was their maxim at all times until civilization got among them, and then a change took place—not as great as with some aboriginal races, as it is natural with these strange people to be kind, quiet and peaceable.



Columbia Palmer, Born on the World's Fair Grounds, January
16th, 1893, and Her Mother.

THEIR HABITATIONS AND MODE OF LIVING.

The majority of my readers, no doubt, labor under the popular idea that these people live in ice and snow houses. I can assure you that is all fiction in respect to their permanent places of abode. When they are traveling, they do sometimes build snow houses ; but they do not last long, as the dampness from the breath turns the inside into ice after they have been in it a few days. Then it becomes extremely cold, and they have to move out and build another; but they prefer, when it is not snowing, to sleep out in the open air in their sleeping bags, which they always carry when traveling. This bag is made of seal-skin, lined with reindeer skin ; made, as a rule, six feet long, with a lap at the end to cover over the head. They can crawl into this bag, with a double suit of furs on, and sleep in the open air when it is sixty degrees below zero, ordinary winter weather in the northern part of Labrador.

Their houses in their villages are built of logs and sods to the thickness of two feet, the roof being the same as the walls. Then they are lined with furs, to make them as warm as possible. It is cold enough in that country in the open air, without going into an ice house to live ; and now for what they live on.

We have been told that they live entirely on the oil and blubber of the walrus, whale and seal ; but this is also wrong to a certain extent. Labrador abounds in game of many different kinds, there being plenty of reindeer, bear and porcupine (considered a delicacy), and in July, August and September an abundance of wild geese, wild ducks, partridges and others too numerous to mention.

During the mild season they store away as much game and fish as possible, to carry them through the long, severe winter ; and, in addition to that, they keep holes through the ice open all winter, for fishing, so that they can catch a mess of salmon at almost any time that they need it—the dogs living on the flesh of the fish the same as the human beings.

In the fall of the year, when they are boiling the walrus and seal blubber down to get their oil for the winter, they store the blubber away for the dogs ; but should they run short of game, and the weather should be too severe for hunting and fishing, then the Esquimaux will eat the blubber. There is no doubt that before civilization crept in among them, that they subsisted a great deal of the time on blubber.

The oil is used for both light and heat. They take a knotty log of wood, soak it in the walrus or seal oil, and it will burn for hours, just the same as our pine knots. They make their fire in the corner of the house, having a small hole in the roof to let the smoke out—making their beds of skins on the ground.

HUNTING THE SEAL.

There is two modes of hunting the seal—the one in boats, and the other from ice-bergs—the last being the most interesting, which I will describe. The Esquimau will put on his full suit of sealskin, get in his kajak (boat), and paddle to a floating ice-berg that has a flat surface ; crawl up on it, pull his boat after him, and then lay down flat near the edge, and lay his harpoon at his side. The seal comes to the surface every minute or two for a breathing spell, it being an amphibious animal (able to live in and out of water). Seeing what it supposes is a seal laying on the ice, the seal immediately approaches, and



Susannah Palisier and Her Two Children.

when it is close enough the Esquimau raises quickly and with deadly aim throws his harpoon, striking the seal close to the head.

The harpoon is made of three pieces, and fastened together with hide, the point of which is made of the bone of the walrus, with a long piece of hide attached, to the end of which they put what is called a floater, made of the skin of a small seal and blown up like a bladder, but much larger. When the harpoon strikes it comes apart, the pole coming to the surface of the water. The point, going through the body of the seal, turns crosswise, so that it will not injure the skin. After the struggles of the seal are over, the floater comes to the surface. Then the Esquimau, having launched his boat, rows to the floater, picks it up and tows his seal ashore.

This goes to show that they, like all aboriginies, have a great deal of ingenuity.

THE ESQUIMAU AS A MECHANIC.

It is quite an interesting thing to know how these people make their boats and sledges, using no nails, screws or metal of any kind. In making a boat, they make a complete skeleton of a boat with strips of wood, fastened together with strips of hide. They then take seal skins, with the hair removed; sew several of them together; soak them in water to make them easy to handle; stretch it tightly over the frame of the boat, and sew it with reindeer sinews along the top, leaving a round hole in the centre for the Esquimau to sit—the boat being so light that he can carry it on his shoulders anywhere.

Their sledges are fastened together in the same manner as the frame of the boat, and strips of sealskin put on the runners to keep them from wearing out.

They will lash a boat on a sled ; hitch five or six dogs ; load an extra sled with their sleeping bags, fishing lines, gun and harpoons ; and start from the village on a hunting and fishing trip, to be gone three or four days at a time, and come back loaded with fish and game of all kinds.

THE ESQUIMAU WOMEN.

You only need to look at the Esquimau women to see the vast difference between them and the American Indians. Among the Indians the women do all the work. The Esquimau women do nothing but attend to their household duties and make the clothing, which is all made of the skins of the seal and reindeer (including the boots), sewn together with sinews of the reindeer, which they use for thread. They use our needles now, where they used to use bone ones ; but they still prefer their own thread, as it is stronger and more durable than ours. They are very industrious, and their sewing is very fine.

In concluding this brief history, I will give you a few samples of their language, including their morning prayer.

A FEW NAMES IN ESQUIMAU.

Augütik (man).	Arnak (woman).
Nutagak (baby).	Igluk (house).
Kingmik (dog).	Kamutik (sled).
Kaiksant (stove).	Kayak (boat).
Aksunae (good morning).	

They have less letters in their alphabet than we have in ours. The following is their alphabet in full :

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P R S T V Z

ESQUIMAU MORNING PRAYER.

Uvlakut Tuksiagusat Atataga tiklangmitugit Kujagevagia Jisuse karisgusikist irnituat naligaptigut unak tamanna sapu-
 tigamga pinngitumlln nungianatumilo tuksiavigivaget ajorniketi
 sinannganekalo tamaito pijalugioo isumagijungnaikit nelumigauk
 ajutunat itlortumolunit ilingakunanga saputillaungninga piniani-
 kalu innsiralo sangui itluakuelogit illonama timigalu tamigalv
 ananagalo ilakalu tamita entiglekutingnut anajungitunat otjitu-
 tanlavlanga oivireklitunuit uklutankonnanga. AMEN.





